

10-3-2013

# Atiyeh! The Governor Victor Atiyeh Collection

Eva Guggemos, Curator  
*Pacific University*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://commons.pacificu.edu/mono>



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), [Political History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Guggemos, E. (Ed.) (2013). *Atiyeh! The Governor Victor Atiyeh Collection*. Forest Grove, OR: Pacific University Libraries.

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Pacific University Libraries at CommonKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in Monographs, Reports, and Catalogs by an authorized administrator of CommonKnowledge. For more information, please contact [CommonKnowledge@pacificu.edu](mailto:CommonKnowledge@pacificu.edu).

---

# Atiyeh! The Governor Victor Atiyeh Collection

## Description

*Atiyeh!* provides an introduction to *The Governor Victor Atiyeh Collection* at Pacific University and commemorates the opening exhibition of the collection in October 2013.

Victor Atiyeh served as Oregon's 32nd governor from 1979-1987. Serving at a time when budget crises were at the forefront, he took a challenging situation and created his legacy: a more efficient government and a more diversified Oregon economy. His governorship, his public service, and his private life tell of a second-generation immigrant success story, of a native Oregonian devoted to his home state, and of a leader who led in trying times, emerging widely admired.

The exhibit, and this accompanying catalog, provides an overview of Atiyeh's life and a sampling of the rich documentary history within the *Victor Atiyeh Papers* at the Pacific University Archives. The complete collection includes more than fifty boxes of letters, photographs, documents and memorabilia.

## Disciplines

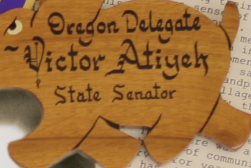
American Studies | History | Political History | United States History

## Publisher

Pacific University Libraries

## ISBN

978-0-9884827-1-5

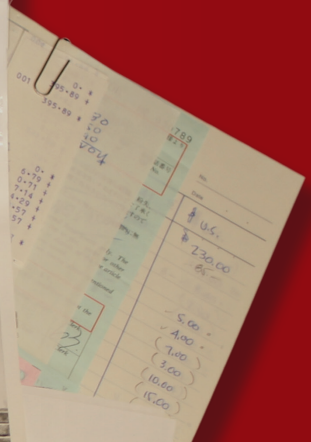


Atiyeh!

THE  
GOVERNOR  
VICTOR ATIYEH  
COLLECTION

at  
PACIFIC UNIVERSITY

★★★



謝謝

THANK YOU

FLIGHT  
APRIL 5, 1983



Dr. Atiyeh's address (from):  
Atiyeh, Victor A. Atiyeh, Gen. ed.  
Atiyeh, Victor A. Atiyeh, Gen. ed.  
P.O. Box 474 - Beirut 11501  
231 - 4444 / Tel. 966-1-24-550  
Club Tathwa via courier





# *Atiyeh!*

THE  
GOVERNOR  
VICTOR ATIYEH  
COLLECTION

PACIFIC UNIVERSITY

*Eva Guggemos, Curator*

## **Atiyeh!**

The Governor Victor Atiyeh Collection  
at Pacific University

Eva Guggemos  
Editor and Curator of the Exhibition

Copyright © 2013 Pacific University. All rights reserved

Except where noted, all material featured in this catalog is part of the Governor Victor Atiyeh Collection of the Pacific University Archives, Forest Grove, Oregon. With the exception of fair use allowed under Title 17 U.S.C., Sec. 107, no part of this catalog may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission from Pacific University.

Cover designed by Pacific University Marketing & Communications. Cover photography by Parrish Evans. Interior design and publication by Eva Guggemos and Isaac Gilman.

Content for this catalog was contributed by Archivists Katrina Windon and Lindsay Zaborowski, and by students Elizabeth Vandermolen, Thomas Radke and Eva Tacubel.

ISBN-13 978-0-9884827-1-5



*Published by Pacific University Libraries*

Additional images and information about the Governor Victor Atiyeh Collection may be found at [pacificu.edu/atiyeh](http://pacificu.edu/atiyeh)

Digital catalog (PDF) may be accessed for free at [commons.pacificu.edu](http://commons.pacificu.edu)

Print catalog may be ordered from [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com)

Atiyeh!

v	From the President
vi	Introduction
2	Family and the Family Business
4	From Student to Legislator
6	Campaigns
8	In the Governor's Office
10	A Statesman for Oregon
12	National Politics
14	The First Arab-American Governor
16	Diversifying Oregon's Economy
18	"Trader Vic"
20	Tax Battles
22	Confronting Crises
24	Valuing Fairness and Transparency
26	Connecting with the Tribes
28	Advocacy
30	Personal Interests
32	Legacy
33	Acknowledgements
35	Sources

**THE  
GOVERNOR  
VICTOR ATIYEH  
COLLECTION**

**PACIFIC UNIVERSITY**



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Pacific University is deeply honored to be the home of the *Governor Victor Atiyeh Collection*, which we celebrate with this commemorative catalog on the occasion of the opening of the *Atiyeh!* exhibition.

This remarkable collection of Governor Atiyeh's personal letters, documents, photographs, records and memorabilia enriches our understanding of Oregon history and politics — and we have received this gift with a determined commitment to preserve, share and promote the study of the legacy of this great governor. The Governor's gift of this collection, however, was made not only to Pacific University, but also to the people of Oregon, whom he served with vision and distinction. As such, it is the Governor's wish that his collection be broadly accessible, just as he was during his many years of public service. Under the stewardship of our University Libraries and Archives, we are honoring that wish by curating both physical and online collections, which will ensure that the Governor's legacy is openly available to students and scholars from around the globe.

Pacific University has enjoyed a longstanding and close friendship with Governor Atiyeh that includes his many years of service and leadership on Pacific's Board of Trustees, continuing today as our distinguished Trustee Emeritus. In recognition of all he has done for the University, the Governor was presented with the University Service Award in 1979 and an honorary doctorate in 1996. Governor Atiyeh's donation of his collection is the culmination of this valued friendship.

As the Governor has said many times, this collection represents his life — and he has placed it in our hands. What an honor! We thank Governor Atiyeh for the trust and confidence he has placed in Pacific University. We are committed to ensuring that his life and legacy will continue to be an inspiration to current and future generations of Oregonians through the *Governor Victor Atiyeh Collection*.

**Lesley M. Hallick, PhD**  
President, Pacific University

# INTRODUCTION

This exhibition catalog celebrates the new *Governor Victor Atiyeh Collection*, an archival collection housed at Pacific University. The following pages give a glimpse into the richness of this collection, which tells the story of Oregon's 32<sup>nd</sup> governor and the United States' first Arab-American governor, a first-generation Oregonian who influenced the course of state's history in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Oregon landscape during the Atiyeh era was one of great political, social, and economic change, presenting Oregonians — and their leaders — with both challenges and opportunities. This is the context within which Victor Atiyeh governed, the landscape upon which he left his mark and created his legacy.

Oregon's economy was hit hard in 1981–82. Nationally, the economy was in recession, but in Oregon it looked an awful lot like a depression; not a Great Depression, but devastating to many Oregon families and businesses. This recession changed the role of timber in the state. There was lower demand for housing and all those wood products coming off the line in Bend, Medford, Eugene, Coos Bay, and the Klamath and Warm Springs Reservations. In addition, changes in ownership of mills and forest lands eventually turned Oregon's economy on its head. Unemployment hit 12.5 percent and stayed there for months. It was during this long crisis that Governor Vic Atiyeh's ability to foster ideas, cajole legislators, and explain options to the public shone at its brightest.

Vic Atiyeh brought a business background to politics. Elected to the Oregon House in 1958, he quickly established himself as an authority on budgeting. It was in this arcane field that he found the true levers of government. During his 20 years in the legislature, Atiyeh also mastered the art of compromise and bipartisanship. For a time in the Oregon Senate, he was one of six Republicans, out of 30 senators. That meant that Democrats constituted a quorum for meetings — officially, no Republicans were needed — but Atiyeh, with his mastery of budgets, was in the middle of decisions and ideas.

Atiyeh's 1978 election to the governor's office came at a time of change in the United States and on the west coast. The promises of government programs to increase access to education, ease poverty, and increase access to health care were running up against the costs associated with these programs. In 1978 California passed Proposition 13, limiting property taxes and radically reforming the role of state government in relationship to local governments. The national economy began to slow as the Iranian Revolution contributed to the doubling of the cost of oil.

In Oregon, the Kicker became law in 1979. This arcane bit of legislation was the response to the tax revolution that had swept California the previous year — as the Oregon Blue Book puts it, “the Legislature placed a condition on ... revenue estimates that required excess funds to be ‘kicked back’ to taxpayers if actual revenues exceeded estimated revenues by 2 percent or more.” 1980 and 1982 saw more drastic Prop. 13–style initiatives fail in statewide votes, but clearly government spending was now a huge issue in the electorate and among elected officials.



Then 1981–82 hit. It dwarfed the impact of the Rajneeshees, and even made the 1980 explosion of Mt. St. Helens seem a bit diminished. In his role as governor, Atiyeh was in the middle of efforts to cut 20 percent from Oregon's general fund budget. It took a lot of negotiation and some special sessions, but it the reductions were made. To look to the future, Atiyeh redoubled his efforts to encourage business growth in Oregon. The timber industry would still be big, but it would not dominate Oregon's economy again. Talks with high tech firms, changing Oregon's tax system to entice international firms to invest in the state, and working with current Oregon economic players to ensure their survival and future success — the Governor was a whirlwind of activity. By the mid-1980s he even worked to firm up funding for education with a dedicated 5 percent sales tax. Oregon voters rejected this proposition — but here was a Republican in an era of tax cutting who was trying to balance the needs and wants of the people with responsible ways to pay for them.

One of the most remarkable political accomplishments of Governor Atiyeh's long electoral career was that he was reelected with over 61 percent of the vote in 1982. Oregonians chose a leader whose ideas and experience were focused on helping the state through an economic catastrophe.

Governor Atiyeh's legacy is all around us in Oregon. His home base in Washington County is the center of a high tech renaissance that puts Oregon firmly in the global economy. Ideas he explored and championed for funding government and making government services more efficient are still being discussed among policy makers. Since he left the governor's office in 1987, Atiyeh has remained at the center of so much in Oregon. He is consulted by those in office, by business leaders, and by candidates.

It all comes back to the pragmatism of the man. When trying to implement dreams, or when dealing with tough times, Governor Atiyeh always sought to do what was possible. His ability to work with others to implement the policies needed at the time still defines him as a person. He is a leader whose legacy is now available to all through the *Governor Victor Atiyeh Collection*.

**Jim Moore, PhD**

Director, Tom McCall Center for Policy Innovation

Department of Politics and Government  
Pacific University





*Atiyeh!*

THE  
COLLECTION

## FAMILY AND THE FAMILY BUSINESS





Governor Victor Atiyeh was born in 1923 to George and Linda Atiyeh, immigrants from Syria and Beirut. His father had immigrated in 1898 to join his brother, Aziz, in the carpet business. The family's "A. Atiyeh & Bro." store was originally on the corner of Southwest Washington Street and 10th Avenue in Portland. They imported carpets from the Middle East and China for sale in Oregon. Victor and his older twin brothers, Edward and Richard, worked in the family business from childhood. The experience of his family, who came through Ellis Island to achieve the American Dream within a generation, deeply influenced Governor Atiyeh's political beliefs.

**N**OWDAYS an Oriental rug is not a luxury — it is an economy. We know of nothing else in home furnishings that has suffered a price decline comparable to Oriental rugs. . . Advancing prices are no longer a prediction; they have been an actuality for some time.

Our "loom-to-home" organization and coast-to-coast distributing facilities which eliminate middlemen and many handling charges offer an outstanding service not obtainable anywhere else.

Call at our commodious new store and see the great values now obtainable in Oriental rugs of every make.

¶ *A living room can be completely furnished with Oriental rugs at a price but little more than for machine-made rugs.*

**Above right:** Text from an Atiyeh Bros. brochure from the 1920s.

**Below right:** Members of the Atiyeh family pose on the occasion of the centennial of the Atiyeh Brothers store opening in Portland. They are standing in front of the carpet that their family entered in the Lewis & Clark Exposition in 1905, for which they won a gold medal.

**Opposite:** Atiyeh's mother and father at their wedding in Beirut, 1920. His mother's family belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch. Governor Atiyeh would join the Episcopalian Church. Image From Linda Atiyeh Anderson's family history, *The Atiyeh Brothers: Richard, Victor and Edward* (2012).



# FROM STUDENT TO LEGISLATOR



In an early show of political promise, Victor Atiyeh was elected president of his senior class at Washington High in Portland. He went from there to the University of Oregon, where he joined the Ducks as a "a speedy 211-pound freshman guard" in 1941. The attack on Pearl Harbor interrupted Atiyeh's freshman year. He and his two older brothers, Edward and Richard, enlisted in the military, but Victor was discharged after an operation for a bone infection. When their father died in 1944, Victor left college to take over the family business.

Atiyeh moved to Washington County after the war. He made a home there with his wife Dolores and their two children. In 1958, Atiyeh ran for State Representative. His campaign slogan, which emphasized business, taxes and education, was remarkably consistent with his focus as governor two decades later.

**Left:** A clipping from the University of Oregon student newspaper shows an 18-year-old Vic Atiyeh at football practice. **Below:** Detail from the handwritten record of returns that Atiyeh ("VA" in the second column) kept from his first election.

**Opposite:** The Oregon Voters' Pamphlet description of Atiyeh from his first campaign for elected office in 1958.

Precinct	LEON	VA	Hitchcock	Norblad	Eichman	Gill	Hatfield	Livingston	Rasor	Unander	Atiyeh	Clary	Davis	Dickinson
1 Mulloy	1	3	15	41		17	19		1	18	18	8	23	
2 Sherwood (city)	2	1	30	90	1	16	64	1		44	55	30	46	
3 Middleton	1	4	17	94	8	23	47	2	1	32	28	42	48	
4 Tualatin	3	1	29	106	3	32	56	2		44	67	22	41	
5 SW Tigard	1	2	26	47	1	9	31			32	30	13	31	
6 NE Tigard	2	1	31	40	1	15	33	1		21	32	15	31	
7 NE Metzger	3	1	19	28	3	7	17	1		20	19	15	15	
8 Garden Home	2	1	70	93	4	22	74	1	2	62	92	42	56	
9 SE Aloha	1	3	18	57	2	25	27	2	2	18	29	30	32	
10 SW Aloha	1	2	27	79	1	19	51	3		33	49	29	52	



**Republican**

**VICTOR ATIYEH**

**For Representative in the Legislative Assembly  
Fourth District, Washington County**



**SLOGAN:** "A young businessman's energetic interest in new industries, taxes and schooling."

He is convinced that our current economic situation needs the viewpoint and direct action of a businessman in the state legislature. As a young businessman he is anxious to see new and diversified industries brought to this area. Atiyeh is confident of the great potential prosperity of Oregon, but believes fast, intelligent action in the legislature is necessary to stimulate it. Regarding Taxes, his business experience will help to insure that tax dollars are more wisely spent. On the subject of School financing, Atiyeh believes we should have the best school facilities possible—but strongly advocates careful spending of the school dollar.

This is Victor Atiyeh's first bid for public office. He asks your vote because he believes sincerely that his business experience and judgment can be helpful in the legislature.

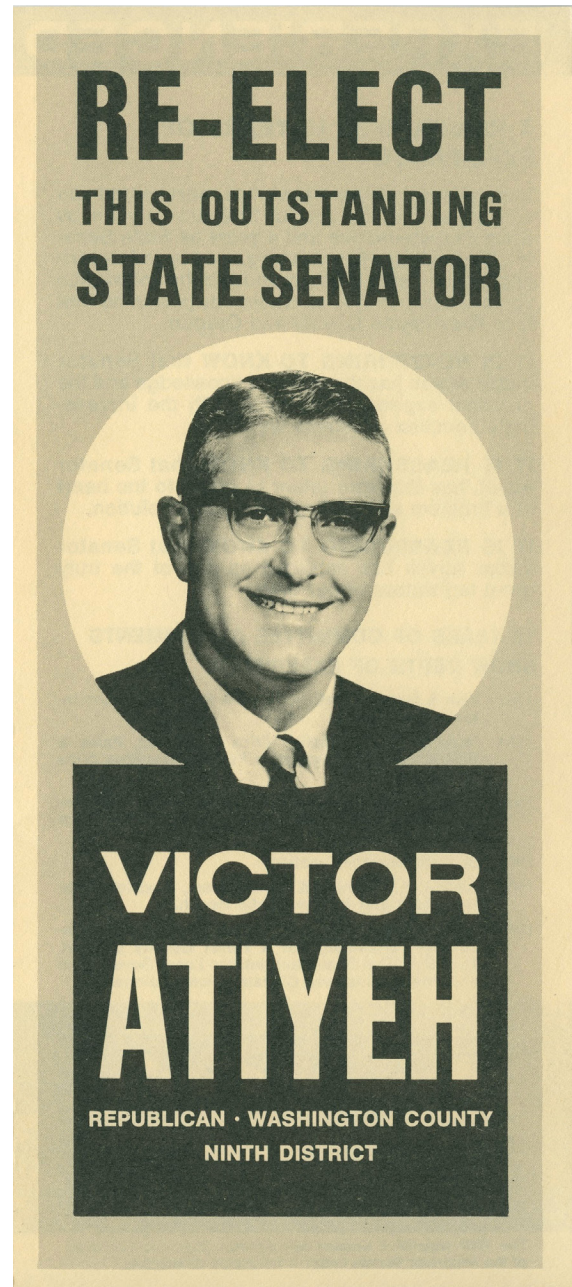


## CAMPAIGNS

Victor Atiyeh first won an election for an Oregon House of Representatives seat in 1958. In 1964, he ran for a State Senate seat representing Washington County. With the exception of his first run for governor in 1974, which occurred in the midst of the Watergate scandal, he won every election that he entered. He won his second term as governor with 61.6 percent of the vote — a surprisingly large margin in a race that many had expected to be closer.

**Right:** Pamphlet from Atiyeh's 1968 campaign for Oregon state senator.

**Opposite above right:** Detail from a flier from Atiyeh's 1978 gubernatorial campaign. **Opposite below right:** Stickers from the 1978 campaign. Staffers remember that when Dolores Atiyeh was on the campaign trail, she would put one sticker on each person with whom she spoke, in order to keep track of whom she still needed to visit. **Opposite below left:** Atiyeh speaking in a gubernatorial debate with Democratic candidate Bob Straub. Atiyeh lost his first bid for the office against Straub, but won the second time with 55 percent of the vote. Despite opposing each other twice, the two governors remained friendly. After Governor Straub's death, Governor Atiyeh wrote the foreword to his biography and led the Board that administered his archives.



*"I went to every County Fair  
— some more than once —  
and enjoyed every minute."*

Governor Atiyeh in a 2009 message to former staff



## **Vic Atiyeh believes in Oregon and its people.**

As a lifelong Oregonian, Vic Atiyeh understands our state and what lies ahead. He has traveled every road, visited every town. He has felt the pulse of the citizens.

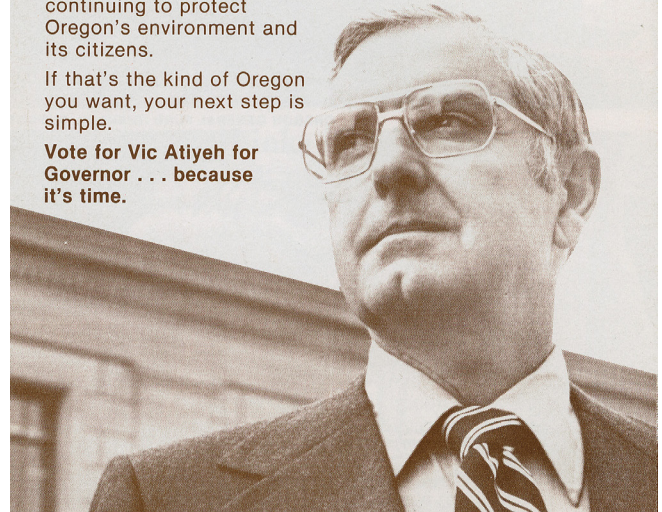
As a member of the state legislature for the past 19 years, Atiyeh has been one of the driving forces behind Oregon's progressive and successful programs. He's ready to help build a *new* chapter in Oregon's history.

## **It's time for Atiyeh.**

Oregon's future is in our hands. As Governor, Vic Atiyeh would bring to Oregon the programs necessary to cut state spending, increase employment, reduce taxes, protect Oregon's farmlands and its farmers, while continuing to protect Oregon's environment and its citizens.

If that's the kind of Oregon you want, your next step is simple.

**Vote for Vic Atiyeh for  
Governor . . . because  
it's time.**





## IN THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

## PURPOSE OF ADMINISTRATION:

## ELIMINATE DUPLICATION

## CLARIFY DEPT DUTIES & OBJECTIVES & AUTHORITY

## ESTABLISH GOALS FOR ACHIEVEMENT

OPEN LINES OF COMMUNICATION w/ STATE EMPLOYEES

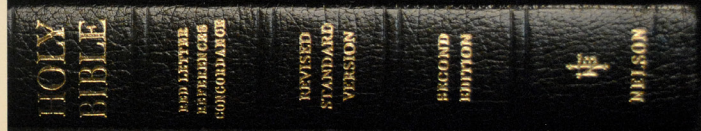
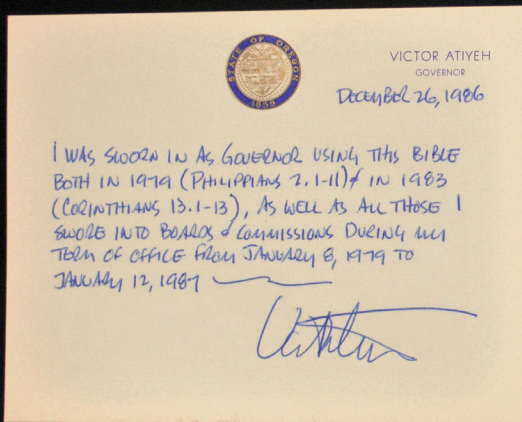
## CREATE UNITY OF PURPOSE WITHIN GOVERNMENT

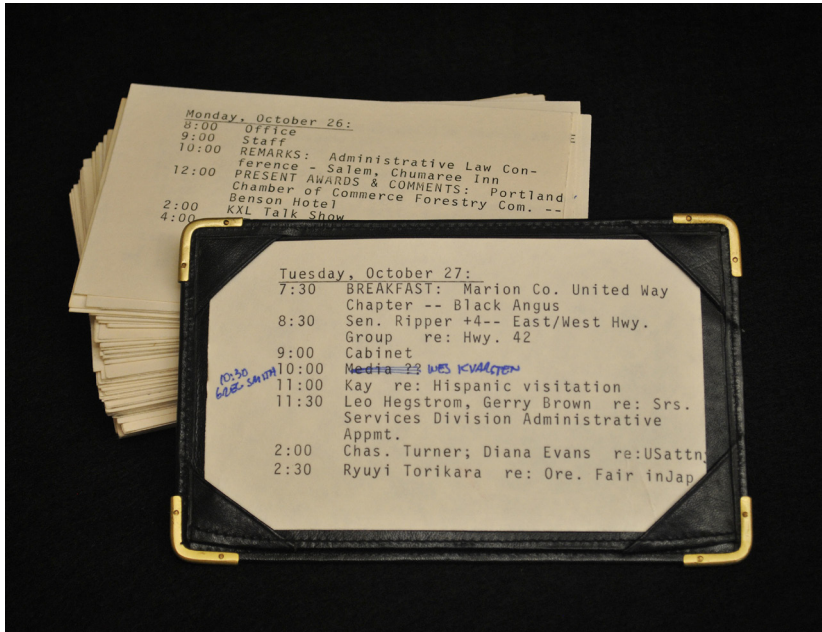
## ACHIEVE MAXIMUM USE OF TAX DOLLAR - MINIMUM USE

OF DOLLAR IN ADMINISTRATION

## CREATE GOVERNOR'S LISTENING POST

## CREATE GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL





Governor Atiyeh took office in January, 1979. He quickly developed a full calendar of meetings and events.

**Left:** Daily schedule cards, which Atiyeh carried in his lapel pocket every day. The Governor's collection includes cards for nearly every day from 1977 onward. **Below:** Governor Atiyeh and Gerry Thompson, his chief of staff. Thompson was the first woman to fill this role.

**Opposite above:** Just before he was sworn in, Governor Atiyeh wrote this informal mission statement for his term, emphasizing government efficiency, open communication and unity of purpose. **Opposite below:** Atiyeh's personal Bible, used in his inaugurations.



*"I remember a time when things were really tough for me — special session after special session, the Rajneeshees, the rotten economy in Oregon [...] I asked the Governor if he could sleep okay at night, because I wasn't. He shared with me that as long as he stayed true to his philosophy and made sound decisions based on that, he never looked back; therefore, he slept very well at night."*

Gerry Thompson, Governor Atiyeh's chief of staff



## A STATESMAN FOR OREGON



After spending twenty years in the Oregon Legislature, Governor Atiyeh entered office with a keen understanding of how government policies could make change. He pushed for bills that he believed would support Oregon's highest priorities — issues such as economic growth and education. He did not like ideas that had good intentions but promised few results. "If I spend the taxpayer's dollar, I want to make sure it gets spent well and does what it's supposed to do. [...] Is it going to do the job or isn't it? That's where the interest lies," he said.

Governor Atiyeh's achievements include: guiding Oregon through the deep recession of the early 1980s; making racial and religious harassment a crime; supporting funding for education and the developmentally disabled; protecting the scenic Columbia River Gorge; and diversifying the state's economy, bringing foreign investment and growth in new industries.

**Left:** Governor Atiyeh, deep in thought.

**Opposite:** Original art for a revised version of the Territorial Seal of Oregon, signed by the artist, Jim Sargent. Atiyeh, who had a deep personal affection for this seal, commissioned this drawing in 1983. The motto — "She flies with her own wings" — speaks to Oregon's pioneering and independent spirit.











THE <sup>FOUNDATION</sup> ~~PHILOSOPHY~~ OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY... AND THE  
208-YEAR-OLD <sup>KU KLUX KLAN</sup> ~~PHILOSOPHY~~ OF OUR NATION... IS TO ASK THE AMERICAN  
PEOPLE TO RUN THE GOVERNMENT... / AND TO DEMAND GOVERNMENT NOT RUN  
THE LIVES OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

THE DEMOCRATS / WHO THREATEN TO STRIP AMERICANS OF OUR <sup>PRIDE,</sup> ~~PRIDE~~  
<sup>our</sup> PERSONAL DIGNITY / AND ~~BE~~ OUR INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE SIMPLY DO NOT  
UNDERSTAND OUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT.

## THE FIRST ARAB-AMERICAN GOVERNOR



Atiyeh was the first Arab-American to be elected governor in the United States. Despite his pride in his Syrian heritage, he often downplayed this distinction, referring to himself as a “devout American.” Like many in his generation, he had been encouraged to integrate into American society as much as possible, and he did not speak his parents’ native Arabic.

Even so, Atiyeh’s family background gave him a special interest in the Middle East. In the 1980s-1990s, he visited Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Israel, Kuwait, Qatar and Iraq, among other countries. He met with trading partners and politicians, including Syria’s President Hafez al-Assad and Egypt’s President Hosni Mubarak. He also visited his father’s hometown of Amar, just west of Homs in Syria, where he was welcomed as an honored guest. After 9/11, he spoke out against intolerance towards the Arab-American community.





# الرئيس الاسديستقبل حاكم ولاية اوريجون؛ اميركا لاتستطيع أن تلعب دوراً بناءً لانحيازها المطلق الى اسرائيل والثقة معدومة في مصداقيتها الزمن يعمل لصالحنا وليس لصالح اسرائيل وحلفائها

يرافقه مستشار حاكم الولاية  
السيد سامي الخال والقائم باعمال  
السفارة الامريكية بدمشق.  
وقد تناول الحديث الاوضاع في  
المنطقة والملاقات السورية  
الامريكية والانطباعات التي كونها  
السيد عطية خلال زيارته للقطر  
العربي السوري.

وقد أبدى السيد عطية اعجابه  
وتأثره البالغ بما شاهده في وطن  
ابائه واجداده من معالم التقدم  
والتنوير والمعمران والحضارة  
والتفاف جماهير الشعب حول  
رئيسها القائد حافظ الاسد  
ومحبته الخالصة له التي لمساها في  
كل مكان ذهب اليه.

وقد اطلع السيد الرئيس السيد  
عطية على الوضع في المنطقة وما  
قامت وتقوم به الولايات المتحدة  
لا مؤكداً ان الولايات المتحدة لا  
تستطيع ان تلعب دوراً بناءً في  
المنطقة وهي منحازة انحيازاً مطلقاً  
الى اسرائيل.  
وقال السيد الرئيس ان الادارة  
التي على ص ١١

اكّد السيد الرئيس حافظ الاسد  
ان الولايات المتحدة لا تستطيع ان  
تلعب دوراً بناءً في المنطقة وهي  
منحازة انحيازاً مطلقاً الى  
اسرائيل.

وقال السيد الرئيس لدى  
استقباله امس السيد فيكتور عطية  
حاكم ولاية اوريجون: ان الادارة  
الامريكية لم تنفذ اي التزام او  
اتفاق التزمت به ولذلك فان الثقة  
بمصداقية الادارة الامريكية  
معدومة لدينا.

واكد السيد الرئيس ثقتنا  
بالمستقبل وقال: ان تجارب  
سنوات من النضال قد اثبتت ان  
اللاجوء الى استخدام القوة لم يعد  
مجدياً، وان من ينظر الى المستقبل  
بموضوعية يجد ان الزمن يعمل  
لصالحنا وليس لصالح اسرائيل  
وحلفائها.

فقد استقبل السيد الرئيس  
حافظ الاسد عند الساعة الحادية  
عشرة والدقيقة الخامسة  
والاربعمين من ظهر امس السيد  
فيكتور عطية حاكم ولاية اوريجون  
في الولايات المتحدة الامريكية



الرئيس الاسد يستقبل حاكم ولاية اوريجون — سانا

*"People ask, 'Can you speak Arabic?'  
I say, 'No.' My dad said, 'You don't  
need to learn the language. It's of no  
use to you at all. You're an American.'  
And that's about 180 degrees from  
what's going on these days."*

Interview in *The Oregonian*, 11/18/2001

**Above:** A clipping from a Syrian newspaper reports on the meeting between President Assad and Governor Atiyeh. The Governor's diary entry from his 1988 meeting reports that they spent over two hours speaking, and that it was "Very good — successful!!" Atiyeh wished that his conversation with Assad had been put to better use by the State Department.

**Opposite above:** A clipping from an Egyptian newspaper shows Governor Atiyeh meeting with President Mubarak, discussing trade between Oregon and Egypt. Today, Egypt continues to be a major importer of Oregon's wheat crop.  
**Opposite below:** On a trade trip to Qatar, 1988.

## DIVERSIFYING OREGON'S ECONOMY



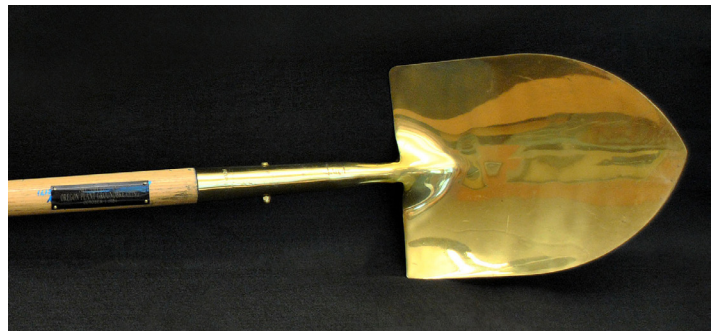
Governor Atiyeh came into office just as the country began a dive into the worst economy since the Great Depression. In Oregon, the timber industry crashed and interest rates soared, while the state jobless rate climbed to 12.5 percent.

To address these financial woes, the governor worked to diversify Oregon's economy. He led the efforts to repeal the state's unitary tax, which had discouraged investment from multinational corporations, and courted the business of the high tech sector. By the mid-1980s, Oregonians began to speak of a "Silicon Forest" growing in Atiyeh's old district of Washington County. Other industries, including sportswear and wine, also grew dramatically during Atiyeh's tenure.



**Above left:** A button proclaims Oregon's new business-friendly atmosphere. **Below left:** A Wall Street Journal article published in August, 1984 noting the change in climate for high-tech business in Oregon. **Below right:** A ceremonial shovel that Governor Atiyeh used in the opening of a new plant for chipmaker NEC.

**Opposite:** Governor Atiyeh, wearing a clean suit, on a tour of Intel's production facilities in Aloha. Image courtesy of the Washington County Museum.







## "TRADER VIC"



At a time when many people were worried about competition between the United States and the growing economies of Asia, Governor Atiyeh saw an opportunity to expand Oregon's trade. He worked to deepen the state's business and cultural ties to Japan, China, Taiwan and other countries in Asia and the Middle East. Atiyeh spent 146 days, or 4.9 percent of his two terms in office, on overseas trade missions. He continued to build commercial ties for Oregon after leaving office, serving on the board of directors for the Greenbrier Companies, Equitable Savings & Loan, Cedars Bank and Key Knife, among other organizations.

**Above left:** Inspecting a factory, probably in Fuzhou, mid-1980s. Fuzhou was one of the first cities in China to be declared part of its "Open Door" policy that encouraged foreign investment. **Above right:** Medal awarded to Atiyeh as a "Best Friend of Overseas China." **Below left:** Ribbon from the first non-stop flight from Portland to Tokyo in 1983. Governor Atiyeh's statue stands in the Portland International Airport in honor of his work to bring trade to the state.

**Opposite:** A ceremonial Japanese helmet and presentation box. Japan's Fuji TV station gave this to Atiyeh to commemorate his being awarded the Order of the Sacred Treasure, which is the highest honor given by the government of Japan to non-Japanese citizens.

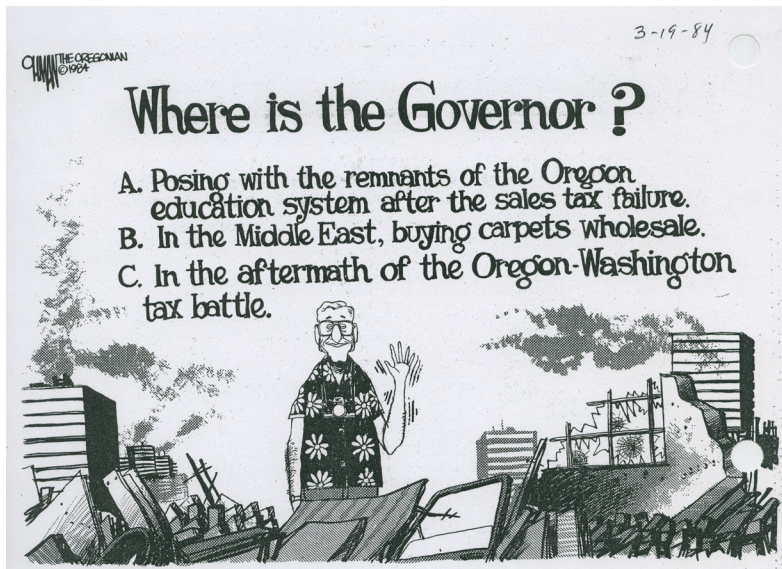


*“No state’s chief executive  
has been more consistent  
in the role of No. 1  
salesman. And, few can  
lay claim to a recruiting  
success ratio the equal or  
better of Atiyeh’s.”*

*Hillsboro Argus* editorial commenting on  
Atiyeh’s success in bringing international  
business to Oregon, 4/15/1986



## TAX BATTLES



**Above:** A political cartoon depicting Atiyeh after the failure of two tax measures that he had supported: a 5 percent sales tax that would have funded education, and a hike on taxes for Washingtonians who work in Oregon. Cartoon by Jack Ohman ©1984 *The Oregonian*. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

**Opposite:** State budget director Jon Yunker sitting behind piles of budget proposals from Oregon agencies in 1984. Governor Atiyeh had asked them to keep a tight rein on their funding requests so that he could lower taxes the next year.

Governor Atiyeh was a fiscal conservative who opposed wasteful government spending and favored tax reform. In his twenty years in the Oregon Legislature, he recalled, "I was always on a tax committee, from Day One until I left." As governor, he eliminated or lowered taxes that discouraged growth, most notably the Unitary Tax, which targeted multinational corporations.

Atiyeh was no ideologue on taxes, however. He called for a 5% statewide sales tax to support public education — a bill that was defeated. He would also work with Democrats to close budget gaps. During the Recession of 1981, Oregon was facing a deficit of \$700 million, or 20 percent of the budget. The state was forced to cut services and raise taxes, and the two parties had to compromise to do it. Though many of the decisions were unpopular, they allowed the state to move forward. Governor Barbara Roberts, who was then a Democratic state legislator, remembered his support for a temporary state income tax hike: "Vic was very brave to do that tax increase. When I think about him serving during that time, I think of the calmness, the lack of hysteria ... the lack of combativeness on his part."





*“The call for tax relief is not a mandate to close our hearts, it is a mandate to open our eyes to spending which is wasteful, spending which is unnecessary and, most of all, spending which ignores the goals and priorities of our people.”*

Atiyeh's First Inaugural Address

## CONFRONTING CRISES



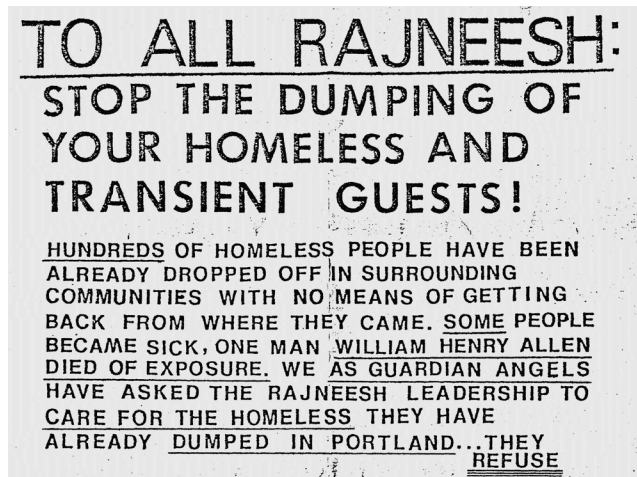
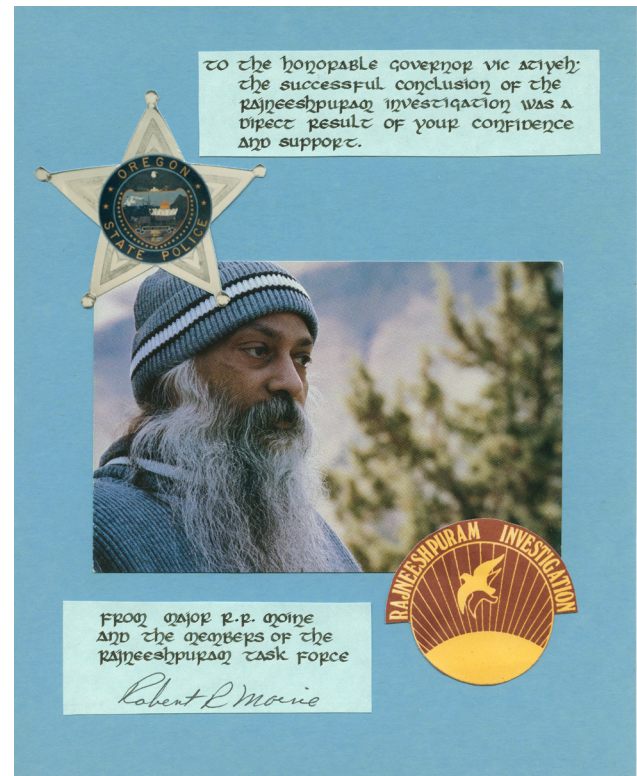


In addition to the major recession that hit during his first term, Governor Atiyeh faced several other crises in office. On May 18, 1980, Mount St. Helens erupted just 52 miles from downtown Portland. Ash fell across northwest Oregon, leading the governor to declare a state of emergency.

The rise of the “Rajneeshpuram,” a cultlike utopian community, presented a different type of problem. Its several thousand residents followed a charismatic leader named Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. They attempted to form their own quasi-state within rural Wasco County, openly undermining local authorities. In a bid to boost their voter registration rolls, they bussed in an estimated 3,700 homeless people to live on their lands, but soon abandoned them in neighboring communities. A State Police task force helped to convict one of its leaders of arson, wiretapping, immigration fraud and attempted murder. The community collapsed soon after Rajneesh was deported in a plea bargain deal.

**Above right:** A thank-you card from the Oregon State Police task force that investigated the Rajneeshpuram, with an image of its spiritual leader, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. For several years, the Governor carried an unsigned order with him that would have declared martial law in Wasco and Jefferson Counties. Happily, a violent confrontation never materialized, and he never had to sign the order. **Below right:** A detail from a leaflet that the Guardian Angels air-dropped onto the Rajneeshees, urging them to stop dumping homeless people on surrounding communities.

**Opposite:** A photograph of Mount St. Helens taken from the cockpit of a helicopter on April 2, 1980. Governor Atiyeh and several of his staff took an aerial tour of the smoking volcano just a few weeks before its catastrophic explosion.



## VALUING FAIRNESS AND TRANSPARENCY

*“I want this Legislature to make the act of racial harassment a crime in Oregon — a felony, punishable by fine or imprisonment or both. I ask you to join me in a resolute stand against bigotry, in the name of justice and equality.”*

Address to the Oregon Legislature, 1981

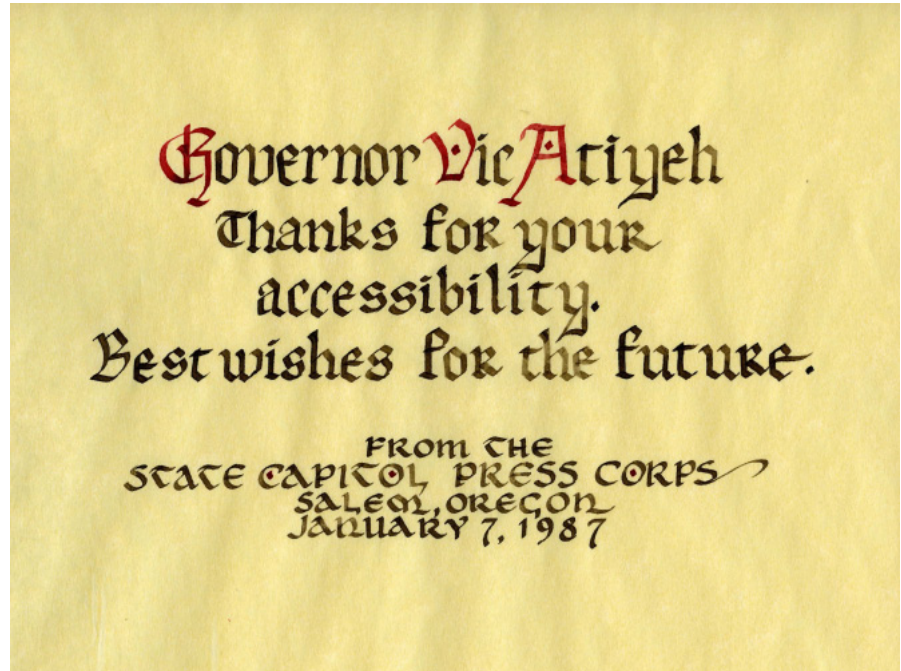


Governor Victor Atiyeh signs racial/religious harassment law.

Governor Atiyeh grew up in a diverse neighborhood in Northeast Portland, where he made friends from many backgrounds. Though he did not have much political consciousness of racial discrimination as a youth, he did develop a belief that people from other groups were “on the same level” as him. They were “just people I grew up with,” he remembered.

When someone burned a cross on the lawn of an African-American family in a Portland suburb, he was incensed. “I don’t like bullies,” he told the press. Governor Atiyeh sponsored a bill that targeted crimes motivated by race, color, religion or national origin. This was among the earliest hate crimes legislation of its kind in the United States.





**Above:** Certificate of appreciation from the State Capitol Press Corps, given to Atiyeh when he left office. He was very proud of having received this and kept it displayed prominently in his office for the next 26 years.

**Opposite:** A news clipping shows Atiyeh signing the racial harassment bill in 1981.

Governor Atiyeh believed in transparent government. When he left office, he turned his official records over to the State Archives, even though Oregon had no law requiring this at the time. He has not placed any privacy restrictions on the use of his personal papers at Pacific University — an extraordinary gesture that immediately benefits researchers. This openness extends to his relationship with the press, as well. As the Salem Statesman-Journal noted in an editorial praising his accessibility (6/7/2009), “He often ate in the Capitol restaurant, where anyone could talk to him, and he held frequent press conferences to discuss issues with Oregonians. He truly saw himself as a servant of his fellow Oregonians.”

## CONNECTING WITH THE TRIBES





With a longstanding interest in history, Governor Atiyeh appreciates the special place of Oregon's tribes within the state. Believing that they have been treated unfairly in the past, he has made an effort to reach out to their communities. As a legislator and as governor, he supported the legal restoration of tribes in Oregon. Since leaving office, he has continued to visit tribal lands and to advocate for their interests.



**Above right:** Governor Atiyeh riding on an ATV with Delvis Heath, Jr., Warm Springs Chief. **Below right:** The Governor with his wife Dolores and Chief Clarence Burke of the Umatilla Confederated Tribes, attending the Pendleton Round-Up.

**Opposite left:** An eagle feather headdress presented to Atiyeh as the first recipient of the Warm Springs Museum's Twanat Award. He wore this on ceremonial occasions. The headdress is displayed with permission of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and The Museum At Warm Springs. **Opposite right:** An embroidered jacket made by Maynard White Owl Lavadour (Cayuse/Nez Perce) and given to Atiyeh by Vivian Minthorn and Viola Wocatsie of the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla. The jacket is displayed with the permission of the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla.



## ADVOCACY

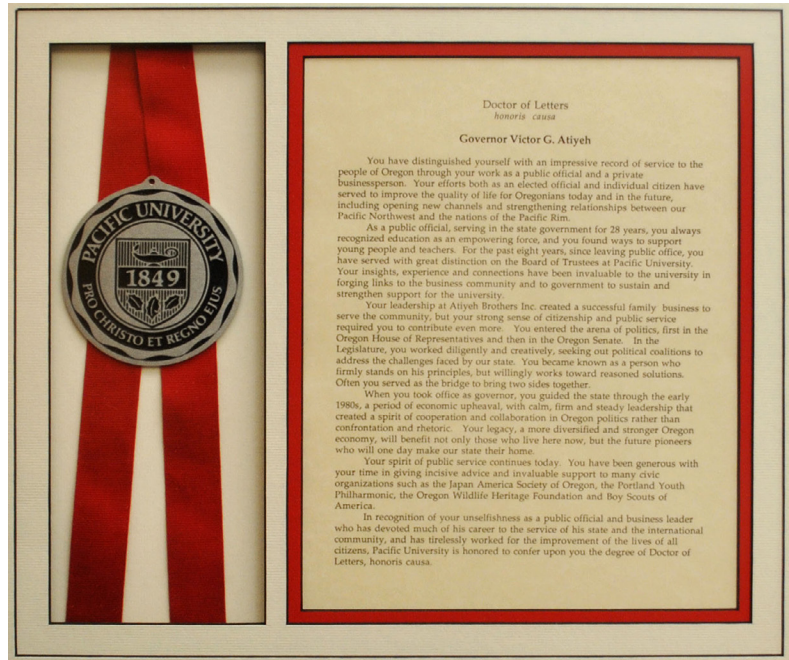
Governor Atiyeh and his wife, Dolores, have supported many causes. Dolores Atiyeh has put particular emphasis on children's health, helping to pass a mandatory immunization law for public schools. The Governor has actively supported the Boy Scouts of America, serving in various executive positions in the Pacific Northwest. He has also lent his image, name and sometimes his pancake-flipping skills to organizations such as the Oregon Historical Society and the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, among many other schools, universities, museums, hospitals and civic groups.





**Above right:** A commemoration of Governor Atiyeh's honorary doctorate from Pacific University. Atiyeh served as a trustee for Pacific and earned awards from many other Oregon universities, both public and private. **Below right:** Governor Atiyeh working at a pancake breakfast for charity.

**Opposite above:** Atiyeh in uniform with other Boy Scout leaders in 1964 and a framed recognition of his service to the Boy Scouts. Having been a Boy Scout and a Sea Scout as a child, Atiyeh returned to the Scouts as an adult to serve. His positions included President of the Board of the Portland Area Council and President and Commissioner for the Columbia-Pacific Council. **Opposite below:** Atiyeh in a promotion for the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry's annual auction in 1980, posed as if he were flying through the air.



## PERSONAL INTERESTS



Alongside his many professional activities, Governor Atiyeh has been active in sports and hobbies. An accomplished marksman and collector of historic guns, he has been a lifetime member of the National Rifle Association and helped to start the Oregon Arms Collectors club. He has also collected historic books and documents, with a special interest in Oregon history. He likes whittling small wooden objects like the chain link pictured here, which he would give as gifts to family and friends. He also enjoys fishing, golf and visiting friends across the state.



**Above left:** Governor Atiyeh with others on a fishing trip on the Umpqua River. **Below left:** A "genuine whittled stick" featuring a wooden chain link, which Atiyeh created and gave to his press secretary, Denny Miles.

**Opposite left:** A paper target from a shooting match hosted by the Air National Guard in 1979.

**Opposite right:** A scrimshaw powder horn by Ladow Johnston and Glen Stearns, presented to Atiyeh at a National Rifle Association banquet.







## LEGACY



Newly elected Governor Victor Atiyeh delivered these words at his inauguration on January 8, 1979:

For 20 years in public service, I have heard Oregonians talking. I have heard the voices of different ages, different races, different stations and different convictions. But the more I listen, the more the voices blend into one, a true common voice of the people of Oregon, expressing common concerns.

As Pacific University continues to develop the Governor Victor Atiyeh Collection, many people will begin to explore his legacy. School children, college students, historians and researchers will delve into his record, contributing to our memory of his time in Oregon. This collection will allow research on the state's business development, international relations, tax reform, social concerns, tribal issues, public policy and natural resources. Complementary collections at the State Archives and the Oregon Historical Society will provide a foundation for the study of Atiyeh's record on these and many other themes. However, one common thread should stand out in any study of Oregon's 32<sup>nd</sup> governor: Victor Atiyeh has been committed to hearing "Oregonians talking." No governor has travelled so broadly throughout Oregon — before, during and after his administration — sincerely seeking to connect with the people he served. He listened to all the different voices of Oregon and found what they shared: "a true common voice of the people of Oregon." This is where his legacy begins.

**Above:** Governor Atiyeh and wife Dolores in a mid-1980s portrait.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Pacific University Libraries would like to thank the many people who contributed to the creation of the *Governor Victor Atiyeh Collection*, as well as the exhibition, the digitization project and this catalog. None of it would have been possible without the tremendous generosity of Governor Atiyeh, who not only donated his collection, but much of his time and energy over the last two years. We will never forget the visits to his home and office, where we came to know his warmth, his stories, his jokes and his anecdotes. These will always stay with us. We thank his wife, Dolores, for allowing us so much time with him and for welcoming us to her home. We would also like to thank the Institute of Museum and Library Services for its funding of the Cooperative Governors' Papers Project Grant, which allowed us to begin processing the collection. The work of the other archivists involved in the grant, including Erin Passehl of Western Oregon State University, Mary McRobinson of Willamette University, Cris Paschild of Portland State University and project archivist Katrina Windon have been greatly appreciated. We thank Kerry Tymchuk of the Oregon Historical Society and Layne Sawyer of the Oregon State Archives for their advice and support. We give special thanks to Denny Miles, the governor's press secretary, for his donations of original material and for his vocal advocacy of the collection's goals. Many of the Governor's other friends and colleagues have begun to add their voices to his. As Pacific University continues to work towards making the Governor Atiyeh Collection the most accessible gubernatorial archive in Oregon, we know that we will continue to thank them.

**Eva Guggemos, MA, MLS**  
Archivist, Pacific University Libraries

For more information on the *Governor Victor Atiyeh Collection* and opportunities to contribute to its continued development, please contact us at [archives@pacificu.edu](mailto:archives@pacificu.edu) or 503-352-1415.





## SOURCES

All sources have been cited within the text whenever possible, with the exceptions below. The archival sources can be found within the *Governor Victor Atiyeh Collection* at the Pacific University Archives.

- p. 7, "I went to every County Fair..." Governor Victor Atiyeh: Oregon Governor 1979-1987. Staff Reunion (2009), p. i.
- p. 9, "I remember a time when things were really tough..." Ibid. p. 2.
- p. 10, "If I spend the taxpayer's dollar..." Governor Atiyeh's Oral History conducted by Oregon Historical Society (1992), p. 303.
- p. 15, "Very good—successful!!" Atiyeh, Victor. Diary from 1988 trade trips to Asia and the Middle East (11/2/1988), p. 79.
- p. 18, "146 days, or 4. 9% of his two terms..." *Oregon Business Journal* (Jan. 1987).
- p. 20, "I was always on a tax committee..." Governor Atiyeh's Oral History conducted by Oregon Historical Society (1992), p. 91.
- p. 20, "Vic was very brave to do that tax increase..." Barbara Roberts, quoted in an editorial, *Salem Statesmen-Journal* (Feb. 2009).
- p. 24, "All on the same level..." Governor Atiyeh's Oral History conducted by Oregon Historical Society (1992), p. 34.
- p. 24, "I don't like bullies": from article "Governor Atiyeh's Crusade: Keeping the Seeds of Bigotry Dormant," *Salem Statesman Journal* (2/8/1981).









[pacificu.edu/atiyeh](http://pacificu.edu/atiyeh)



*The Governor Victor Atiyeh Collection at* **PACIFIC UNIVERSITY**

Library | 2043 College Way | Forest Grove, OR 97116

